
Open Space

Open space and recreational opportunities are becoming increasingly important for Cambridge residents. The amount, availability and accessibility of open space and recreational activities are significant factors in the quality of life of the City. The City is constantly exploring new ways of acquiring, creating and preserving open space in all of its neighborhoods. The city's urban, built-out character and density, along with a profitable real estate market and development pressure have made meeting open space demands challenging. This situation is especially evident in the Agassiz neighborhood. The Agassiz neighborhood's dense nature and small amount of land dedicated to public open space puts a relatively large amount of pressure on parks in the neighborhood. Based on the density and demographics of the neighborhood, the location of schools and existing open space, the Agassiz neighborhood was identified as

one of the areas most in need of open space in the Report of the Green Ribbon Open Space Committee, March 2000.

Parts of the Agassiz neighborhood are also in need of specific types of open space and parks. Porter Square is an area especially in need of more open space, having been identified in the Green Ribbon Report as needing tot lots, neighborhood parks, and community parks. Northern Agassiz was also identified as needing a community park. While tot lots and neighborhood parks are smaller and serve those living within walking distance, community parks in Cambridge range in size from 2.6 to 15 acres and serve more than one neighborhood. These parks have the capacity to sustain activities such as organized sports leagues and active recreation. Currently, Sacramento Field is the only park in the neighborhood able to support these activities.

Of the 492 acres of public open space in the city, the Agassiz neighborhood has only two facilities totaling 1.3 acres. The Agassiz neighborhood currently has only 0.25 acres of public open space available for every 1,000 residents. This is the lowest rate of open space in the city when compared to the other neighborhoods. The rate of open space per 1,000 residents age 14 and under and per 1,000 families below the poverty level are both below citywide averages but not as dramatically.



Tot lot at Sacramento Field

Open Space in the City of Cambridge and the Agassiz Neighborhood

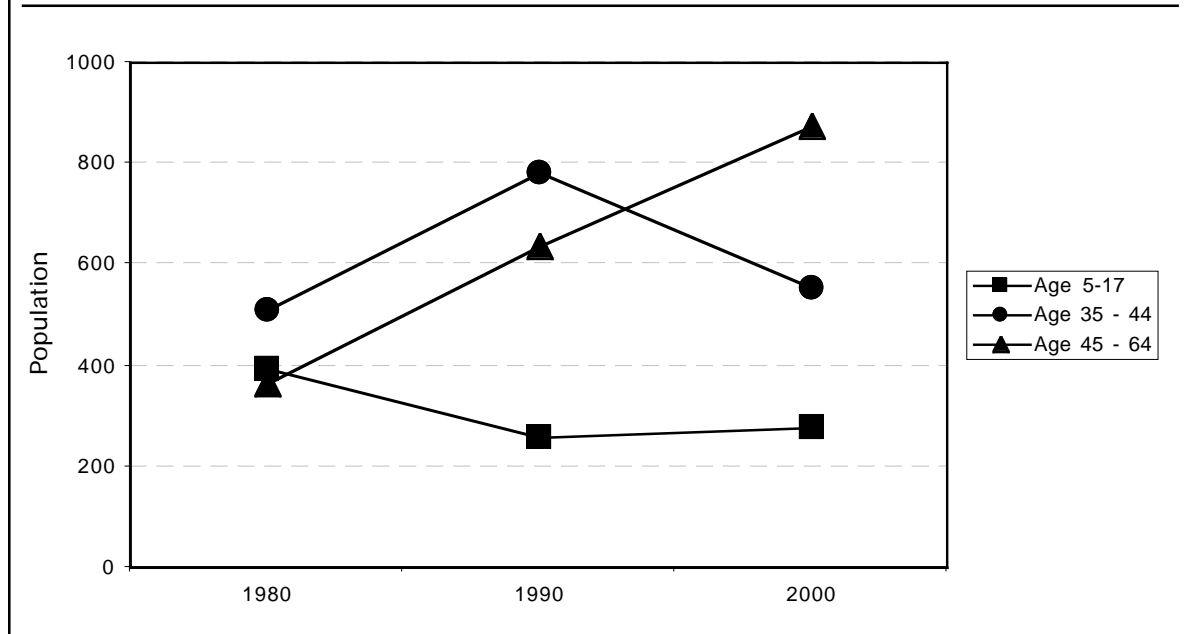
	Total Population	Public Open Space (acres)	Public Open Space Per 1000 Total Population	Population 0-14 Years Old	Public Open Space Per 1000 Population 0-14 Years Old	Families Below Poverty Level	Public Open Space Per 1000 Families Below Poverty Level
Cambridge	95,802	492.8	5.13	11,512	42.18	1,273	387.12
Agassiz	5,100	1.3	0.25	347	3.75	7	185.71

Source: 1990 U.S. Census, Cambridge Open Space Plan, Revised 1999

Adult populations generally desire different types of open space and recreational uses and activities than school aged children. School aged and younger children use tot lots, playgrounds, and playing fields. Older residents are more likely to desire green space and other places to walk, sit, relax, and meet. The population of school-aged children (aged 5-17) in the Agassiz neighborhood

has decreased over the last 3 decades by 29.39%, while the adult population (aged 35 - 64) has increased in the neighborhood by 63% since 1980. In the Agassiz neighborhood the shift in population may result in increased demand for more passive open space and a wider variety of recreational uses.

Agassiz Population Shift by Age Group 1980 - 2000



Source: U.S. Census 2000

The two parks located in the Agassiz neighborhood are the Alden Park (0.1 acres) and Sacramento Field (1.2 acres).

Alden Park is a small park located across the street from the Maria Baldwin Elementary School (formerly the Agassiz School). The park consists of a playground and an adjacent small paved play area. Parks of this type are generally smaller in nature and intended to serve children under 12. Because it is directly across the street from the Baldwin School, the park must meet the needs of the student population during school hours.

Sacramento Field is located off of Sacramento Street and consists of a small soccer/ softball field, a play structure, and basketball court. The City identifies this park as a neighborhood park. These types of parks generally provide opportunities for both passive and active recreation for a variety of age groups. Because Sacramento Field is the only park of its type in the neighborhood it is a very valuable resource to residents.

Harvard University and Leslie University also own a large portion of land in the Agassiz neigh-

borhood. Some of this land is green and/or open space. However, these areas are owned by the respective institutions and are not necessarily accessible to the public or protected from other future uses. As these institutions expand, the Study Committee felt that the possibility of creating new publicly accessible open space should be explored.

Due to the developed character of the Agassiz neighborhood there appear at this time to be few opportunities to acquire new land for public open space. The Study Committee felt that as existing parcels in the neighborhood are redeveloped, the City of Cambridge should seek ways to encourage the creation of new open space. Existing open space facilities in the Agassiz neighborhood should be enhanced and maintained in order to meet the needs associated with increased use by residents. Furthermore, the city should explore new ways of working with the institutions in the neighborhood to create new open space.



Basketball courts at Sacramento Field

Open Space Recommendations

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1. The City of Cambridge should work with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority to explore the feasibility of constructing a park over the commuter rail line adjacent to the Porter Square T stop. If that fails, we recommend putting one of the many parking lots in the square underground and using the above ground area for a park. Porter Square is the location in Cambridge that is furthest from any parks, and creating a park over one of these locations is one of our most significant recommendations.
 2. The City of Cambridge should pursue the open space preservation funds available through the Community Preservation Act.
 3. The Committee recommends enhancing the recreational use, especially the passive recreational use, of Sacramento Field.
 - The City of Cambridge should consider renaming Sacramento Field to Sacramento Park.
 - New signage should be placed at the main entrance to Sacramento Field on Sacramento Street.
 - The recently re-opened second public access route to Sacramento Field/Park should be maintained.
 4. The City of Cambridge should encourage Harvard University to incorporate publicly accessible open space on Oxford Street/Divinity school property.
 5. The Committee requests that Harvard University landscape the existing parking lot on Oxford Street once underground parking is constructed.
 6. Encourage the closing of Oxford Street for community celebrations.
 7. Encourage prompt removal of all graffiti by property owners - including City street signs and U.S. mailboxes.
 8. Encourage the Agassiz Neighborhood Council to continue its tree-sponsorship program.
 9. Encourage residents to take advantage of the City's sidewalk tree program.
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